

# Beautiful Law

Author C. S. Lewis described God's law as "luminous, severe, disinfectant, exultant." God's law is certain and everlasting, instructing us in life-giving ways. The law is God's sweet word that enlightens us and calls us to account, leading us to be what God has created us to be. It enables us to live together in community, set apart as God's people.

## Focus Scripture: Psalm 19

This is one of a group of psalms known as "Torah psalms," songs in praise of God, the creator and lawgiver. The broader concept of *Torah* (literally, teaching or guidance) includes the whole content of God's revelation. Through the stories of Israel's ancestors in the faith and the writings of prophets and historians, God's nature and purposes are made known in Torah.

Through Torah Israel learns how to live in the covenant relationship with God. The term implies not a legalistic adherence to a set of principles, but rather life in an ongoing relationship, as suggested by the term "teaching." Psalm 19 uses several terms for the Law – decrees, precepts, commandments, ordinances – to remind us that the Law is rich and varied.

The psalm begins with a riddle – what tells of God's glory without saying a word? The creation shows us who God is and what God wants us to be. The sun is not a god, as in some other religions, but points us to God the creator. The order of creation is unchanging – the sun rises and sets reliably each day. So God's law is certain and everlasting. Just as there is nothing hidden from the sun, so the law illuminates and reveals. The law is life-giving.

The psalmist describes God's law as sweeter than honey, and says that "in keeping them there is great reward." What sort of reward might this be? The psalmist is not thinking of wealth and possessions, nor life free from trouble. It is more a description of how, when a person honours God's law, he or she deepens and strengthens relationship with God, who gives life and wholeness.

When we fall short in honouring God's law, the psalmist reminds us to pray for God's forgiveness because God is our "rock" and "redeemer." The word *redeemer* is a kinship

word – God is in close relationship with us and can deliver us from the difficult circumstances that are the consequences of not following in God's ways.

This psalm, like many others, is not only for individual reflection, but is meant to be recited in worship. It closes with a prayer that recitation of the psalm will be an acceptable worship offering to God.

Exodus 20:1–17 recalls the giving of one portion of God's law, the Ten Commandments. They are described as the "words" that God spoke to the people of Israel after delivering them from slavery in Egypt. Following in the wise ways of these ten leads to stronger relationships with God and neighbour.

God's wisdom is surprising, often challenging human understanding. In 1 Corinthians 1:18–25, Paul contrasts wisdom and foolishness, power and weakness. Jesus' death on the cross seems a stumbling block ("scandal") and foolishness in terms of the "wisdom of the world." Yet in what seems foolish and weak, God's wisdom and power of salvation are known. Jesus is the living wisdom, showing us what God is like.

Jesus came to teach people what it means to live in God's way. In John 2:13–22 Jesus overturns the tables of the moneychangers, challenging those who would bind God's law with human rules and traditions. Jesus fulfills the law; living in the gospel of Christ is a fulfillment of the law.

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God's law is life-giving, beautiful wisdom, teaching us how to live in positive relationship with God and with other people. When has God's gift of the law been liberating and life-giving to you? When has it seemed restrictive? To what extent does God's law mark the way you live, as an individual and as a church?

March 15, 2009

Focus Scripture  
Psalm 19

Additional Scriptures  
Exodus 20:1–17  
1 Corinthians 1:18–25  
John 2:13–22

O God, always creating, always revealing to us your righteous paths, teach us to delight in your law and guide us in your way of life. We give thanks to you through Jesus the Christ, who came to show us that way. Amen.

If you have Internet access, visit [www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com) to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

